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The makers of wealth

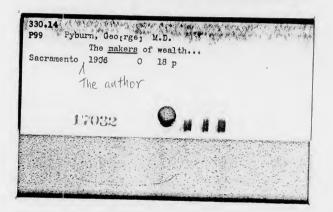
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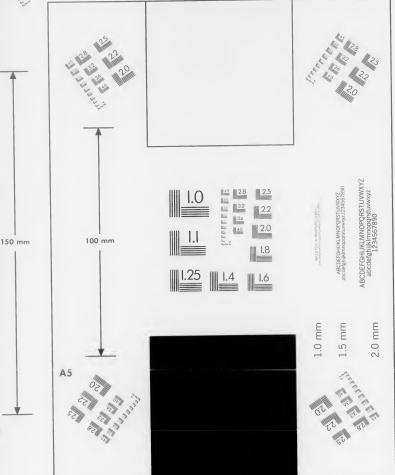
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The makers of wealth.



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Ву

GEO. PYBURN

The world is filled with abundance * * which shows the wonderful effectiveness of labor; for labor either of the past or the present is, after all, the source of all value, and the means by which all wealth is brought into being.

THE

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MAKERS OF WEALTH

FOREWORD

The method of this essay is mainly analytic and demonstrative. It proposes to inquire into the relative values of the various steps taken in the production of wealth, and to inquire as to the proportion of the total reward which is justly due to the various factors. It is in no sense hortatory or persuasive, but leaves to the conscience of the reader, without more ado, the question of how he shall act in view of the conclusions reached. It leaves also to the judgment of the reader, and to the results of his experience, the practibility of making such changes in his life, or in the general mode of life, as may tend to the rectification of any inequalities or lack of justice which may be discovered in current methods and rates of remuneration severally accorded to those engaged in producing social well-being.

To prevent misunderstanding, the word "Wealth" as herein used shall first be defined: The word in its original meaning signifies "wellness" or "well-being"—a condition—just as warmth and strength severally mean

warmness and strongness; it has however by usage come to stand for the things which conduce to this condition of well-being. The lexicons define wealth as "an accumulation of those material things that men desire to posess and that have an exchangeable value"; things which have a pleasure-giving value may be added, to complete the definition.

In this sense then, the word "wealth" will be used herein, meaning things which are made or gathered to satisfy human wants and human desires. The ultimate aim of the essay is to ascertain whether the inductions from the facts ascertained, agree with the current ideas of justice—ideas deduced from the principles of equity which we of to-day profess to believe constitute the foundation of modern civilization.

When we look around the world and behold the immense number and magnitude of the things which serve to satisfy human needs and gratify human desires—things of usefulness and beauty, things which delight the senses in various ways, and in various ways arouse the emotions, and reveal to us the joy of life—we are led if at all of a thoughtful turn of mind, to inquire: how these things came, from whence and by whose agency.

If we go to the bottom of the question it soon becomes evident that the surface of the planet—the earth—including of course the influences from the sun—heat, light and electricity—is the ultimate source and fountain of all hings pertaining to human life and indeed of humanity itself. Dust thou art! We go out into the wilderness and there we see grass, trees, flowers, animals, rocks, vater; and we satisfy any inquiry which suggests itself as to their origin by saying: they come out of the earth or out of the waters—they grow.

But the case is different in cities, and generally in places where men in great numbers are gathered together. Here

we see structures of various kinds, -houses factories temples and other buildings,-which we know have been planned and constructed by man; we see machines which we know are the work of human hands, roads which have been laid out and graded by men; we see pictures and statues and gardens which we know have been painted and chiseled and cast, and planted by our fellows; we hear music-not from human throats only, but also from instruments fashioned and operated by men. And altho-inquiring concerning their origin, we are forced to admit that they came originally from the land or sea, as to their material or "stuff;" we can not say they grew. They are the result of labor, work, muscular efforts. But yesterday, this spot of ground was vacant-except for a covering of grass-open to the sky and sunshine and rain: today a number of men congregate; and to-morrow, behold! it is covered by houses, factories, temples; adorned by statues and diversified and beautified by parks and gardens. This many-sided change is due to the activity of the men congregated. They have been moving to and fro, occupied mainly in altering the conditions and shapes and places of various bits of earth, and rearranging them to suit their fancies; that is to say: in shaping and arranging them to match a collocation of ideas or images previously existing in their minds.

If we seek further to know in detail the steps by which these metamorphoses were wrought, we shall find that, of these men—potent magicians, every one—congregated in this formerly baren spot of earth, some have taken one part, and some another in the complicated series of operations which have resulted in the transformation of the wilderness into a blooming garden and city of delight. Some have quarried stone, or dug clay and have made this soft and shapeless earth into hard bricks; some have felled and shaped, with axe and saw and plane, the trees which grew spontaneously in the forest, and have joined the many pieces together to build these various structures.

Behind and alongside of these builders too, were others, who indirectly but powerfully aided in the results shown, by digging the ores of iron and copper and zinc and tin, smelting and moulding and hammering the resulting metal into axes and saws and nails and hammers; others who from sand and ashes made glass; others who made paint with oil and varieties of earth, and made brushes to spread this paint, from the hairs of swine and camels; and so on to an indefinite extent: attention being called to the fact or consideration that, without these indirect aids, the main work could not have been accomplished. And the same holds good in every department of production; the final result is dependent on a wide co-operation either voluntary or enforced among workers—laboring men.

And these have ever been the conditions of wealthproduction as far back as the history of civilization extends. The Pyramids of Egypt were not built by Cheops, or Chephron, or Mycerinus, as our histories teach us; they were built by laboring men. These laborers brought the limestone which forms the main bulk of the structures from quarries fifty miles distant, and the red granite which forms the facing, from quarries five hundred miles away. The great cities of Thebes and Karnak and Ramesium, and the temples which render them famous, were not built by Thothmes, or Rameses, or Usertsen, or Seti, or Pharaoh, but by laborers directed by these monarchs and by his architects. We have been taught however, that hese monarchs fed the laborers thus employed. This is only another mis-statement; the food they ate and the clothes (if any) they wore, was produced by other laborers who raised corn and cattle, to feed not only their fellow laborers but their masters the monarchs, whom they also clothed and housed in great splendor. The same thing may, nay must be said of the Assyrian Cities, Ninevah and Khorsbad; of the Persian city, Persepolis; of the Greek cities and temples, the Parthenon and Theseum, the Erechtheum at Athens, and the temple of Diana at

Ephesus. These were not built by the various reigning monarchs and architects, Alexander, Pericles, Collicrates and others; they were built and decorated by quarrymen, masons, painters and sculptors, actual hand-workers. The former planned and looked on and received the glory. So of the more modern cities of Rome, Europe America—indeed of all cities throughout the world.

Again: We visit a tribe or community of more or less naked savages. Here we see the people living with the minimum of clothing-aprons of leaves or prepared bark, rudely woven fabrics of vegetable fibre and skins of such wild animals as the chase affords-each individual gathering, preparing and making his own wardrobe. We understand at once that here the actual hand worker is the principal or sole producer of such wealth as he individually enjoys. But we pass on to people who live in the midst of a more elaborate civilization. Here various vegetal and animal productions are utilized in the making of many more comfortable and elegant fabrics for dress. But, as in the matter of dwellings and temples we are forced to look back to the hand-workers as the basis, and not only the basis but the complete producers of the finished fabric-the necessary factors in the production of this kind of wealth. The agricultural laborer who plows, and in other ways prepares the soil for the raising of cotton, hemp and linen fibres; those who sow the seeds and cultivate and reap the crops and prepare the necessary fibre for spinning and weaving cloth; the spinners and weavers, fullers and dyers, and lastly the tailors, seamstresses, and generally the makers of clothing. These-depending for the raw material on the workers first mentioned, are, all of them, absolutely necessary to the production of modern dress. The same-changing this for that-may be said concerning the use of animal fiber, wool, silk, hair: the hand-worker is the ultimate producer.

An examination and analysis of food production pre-

sents us with the same results. Passing beyond those tribes which depend on the gathered roots, spontaneous fruits of trees, bark and leaves for subsistance; and beyond the hunters of wild animals to the nomads who gather together herds of cattle, sheep, goats and horses, and ultimately arrive in sight of agricultural communities, who enjoy a more or less regular and complete system of food production; we come to the laborer as the first and last of the series concerned in accomplishing the work of alimentation. And beyond those who initiate and bring to completion the raw material, we see the millers, the butchers, the cooks—and humble dish-washers—potters, and cutlers, who are all required and must do their work before we can sit down and enjoy the wholesome and toothsome food set before us for dinner or supper.

Here it is proper, and perhaps necessary, to warn against a misunderstanding which may possibly arise, namely: that in view of the high estimate placed upon the "common laborer" and those who produce and prepare the raw material of every variety of wealth, the directors or so called captains of industry, those who plan and organize industrial groups, architects in the building department, inventors of machinery and "processes", artists in painting and sculpture, in song and music, composers, literateurs, and other exponents of esthetics are relegated to a lower place in social estimation. No such inference is intended. These people are all useful and perhaps necessary to co-ordinate the heterogeneous labors of the hand-workers, and to the increase and perfection of the finished product. They too are actual laborers. The contention-in general terms-is that, all who co-operate in the production of a given object-some form of wealth-are equally necessary, and appear from the foregoing analysis to be equally worthy of regard, and of course entitled to an equal share of the natural reward accruing to their common labors, namely the thing produced. Notwithstanding this conclusion however, in

accordance with the spirit of "Foreword," there is herein no assertion of duty or necessity to execute this justice in present practice. Those who fondly believe that injustice may result in a happy and stable state of society, are entirely at liberty to disregard the deliverances of logic and to continue doing as their fathers have done. Nemesis may be long in making her appearance, and there is a seductive ring in the so called common-sense saving: "after us the flood."

Artists and other exponents of esthetics, are quite as valuable members of society as brickmakers-no more so. The artist ministers to, and satisfies the spiritual longings of the soul; moreover his work-mark the word-is productive of order and beauty, all of which adds to and enhances the joy of life. The exponents of esthetics in practice are worthy of equal honor with the men who dig and temper clay and thus make bricks possible and comfortable houses; but no more. I quote on this subject, Bernard Shaw: * * * "A day's work is a day's work, neither more nor less, and the man who does it needs a day's subsistance, a night's repose and due leisure, whether he be painter or ploughman. But the rascal of of a painter, poet, novelist or other voluptuary of labor is not content with his advantage in popular esteem over the ploughman, he also wants an advantage in money, as if there were more hours in a day spent in a studio or library than in the field, or as if he needed more food to enable him to do his work, than the ploughman to enable him to do his. He (or we) talks of the higher quality of his work, as if the higher quality of it was his own making-as if it gave him a right to work less for his neighbor than his neighbor works for him-as if the ploughman could not do better without him, than he without the ploughman-as if the value of the most celebrated pictures has not been questioned more than that of any straight furrows in the arable world-as if it did not take an apprenticeship of as many years to train the hand and eye of a mason or blacksmith as of an artist—as if in short the fellow were a god, as canting brain worshipers have for years past been assuring him he is."

The following considerations too should moderate our extravagant estimate of all sorts of "overman", namely: that without the clay diggers and mortar mixers and hod carriers, we could not have houses, notwithstanding a full supply of captains of industry, architects, artists, and philosphers. Houses were built before either or any of these functionaries existed, and useful and elegant fabrics and clothing were made before the invention of the Jacquard loom, and artists of song and of pipe and tom-tom sprang in all ages and among all peoples, from the "common" people, the workers. These were the ancestors and progenitors of the Ole Bulls, Linds, Beethovens and Wagners. Society-people-alone made those possible. The emotions developed by the experiences of lifejoyous, sad, amorous and revengeful,—were the sources of inspiration to ballad, and song and drama, both rude and refined.

A propos, I quote Wagner, who by the way was philospher as well as musician. Declaring one day his faith in the people, and his belief that they would be the artists of the future, and that from the most absolute democracy the true music would come, his critics pointed derisively to the multitudes as a conclusive negative. In reply he said: "this mob is in no wise a normal production of human nature, but is instead the artificial product of your unnatural culture; all the crimes and horrors which you find so repulsive in the mob, are only desperate incidents of the war which real human nature is waging against its cruel oppressor-modern civilization." Continuing he says: "from possessions which have become private property, and which now, strangely enough are regarded as the very foundation of good order, spring all the crimes both of myth and of history."

Incidentally it has been shown that, in all departments

of production, a large number and great variety of workers co-operate in the making of almost any article (of wealth) which can be named. Take for example, that simple tool, a needle, and follow its making, from the iron ore dug out of the earth, until it is in the hand of a seamstress and in actual use. To simplify the story we shall suppose it to be made by a single workman, and as far as possible "by hand." A needle may be described as a piece of steel wire, pointed at one end and perforated at the other. We say the needle shall be made by a single workman. But before this workman can begin, a whole series of workmenlaborers, skilled and unskilled-have been occupied in producing what may be called the raw material, namely the steel wire. Iron ore has been dug, or gathered, and smelted and run into "pig-iron." In order to smelt the ore, lime and coal are required. Both limestone and coal must be quarried, and furnaces built, and bellows or fans made by other workmen, to an extent which it is hard to follow or particularize. Afterwards, by a series of more or less complicated operations the pig-iron is converted into steel: the steel in shape of an ingot has been hammered or rolled into a bar, and this bar, has been drawn into steel wire. This wire is taken by the needle maker, who expends his strength and skill thereon, in cutting, pointing and perforating it; finally it is delivered to the purchaser.

Thus, we see that, in the making of such a simple tool as a needle, a whole series of operations are required to be performed beforehand, in order that the raw material—the wire—can be obtained. These operations mean labor, some of it arduous, dirty, and apparently requiring little skill or intellectual exertion. But without these—no needle! True, in the development of this as of other industries, chemists and engineers—people of great knowledge and skill—have been working to improve the quality, lessen the cost, and increase the quantity of steel yielded

over that produced by hand labor. But the stubborn fact remains that, the ore gatherers, the limestone gatherers, the furnace builders, and the grimy smelters, are absolutely necessary, before the more refined and skilful work of the chemists and the makers of the finished article. And too, it must be remembered that needles were made and used before chemists or engineers or factories existed. The hand-worker can live, and make his own tools without the assistance of overman or factory director.

Land, Capital and Labor, according to John Stuart Mills, are the three factors of wealth. This is only partially true. Land does nothing; it is the fountain of wealth, the mine from which the raw material of wealth is extracted by labor. Labor is in fact the sole factor or maker of wealth, as has been demonstrated in our previous studies.

Capital is merely a portion of existing wealth, set apart and used as a tool in the operations which produce more wealth. But the tool is useless except in the hands of the laborer. All the capital of the world cannot produce so much as a needle or a yard of cloth. Suppose the laborers of the world to refuse or neglect to use capital; how soon would it not become a heap of refuse, a cumberer of the ground?! Capital is in fact wealth; and of course can not be its own creator. See how exactly it answers to the accepted definition of wealth: "an accumulation of those material things which men desire to possess, and which have an exchangeable value"-buildings, machinery, raw materials as first gathered from the earth, money etc. Land, while sometimes included in capital, is not so in reality; for it is not land itself, but the monopoly of land, -the power to withhold it from use, -which makes it seem part of capital. This ownership or monopoly alone, gives land an exchangeable value.

It is true that, capital enables its possessor to "make money," as the phrase goes. In truth it only enables its possessor to gather money, a very different thing. Instead of capital being productive, it merely enables its

possessor to transfer wealth from one person to another—from the possession of others to himself. Even here it may be shown that, it can not do thus much: it is only when in use that it is thus potent; and the expression "in use" means: in the hands of the laborer. Thus is the bubble capital pricked, and shown to be an iridescent dream; thus it is shown to be a swaggering impostor, masquerading in borrowed clothes—the clothes of the laborer, whom it contemns, and even pretends to support

It was said: all roads lead to Rome. We may here say: all quests, all analyses of the genesis of wealth, resolve themselves on LABOR.

From capital to the possessor of capital-the Capitalist -is a natural step. As a capitalist pure and simple, who, as we have heretofore shown, does nothing towards the production of wealth, he is entitled to neither honor nor reward. As a capitalist only, he is in truth a usurper, a robber, a devourer of his fellow men. But some capitalists are in addition men of faculty, organizers, and skilful directors of industry, inventors, and in these respects useful men. For these faculties and their exercise, such a one is entitled to both honor and reward; being in virtue thereof a laborer, a true maker of wealth; but it is only in co-operation as we have seen, that his labor is productive; and it is a fair question-only to be answered in one way-if the brick-maker and blacksmith are not entitled to quite as much honor as he, and to the same measure of reward

But, be it remembered that, there are a thousand capitalists—great and small—who know nothing, care nothing, and no nothing, in respect of the industry in which their capital is invested. "Coupon cutters" is their designation; they live on dividends, interest, "rake offs," as gamblers say. These are cumberers of the ground, and are entitled to neither honor nor reward; they are parsities on the social body, consuming its substance without returning an equivalent. It is entire-

ly a question of social education and intelligence, how long society will refrain from turning them adrift.

The people who "make things" at first hand are not the only workers, not the only ones entitled to the honorable appellation laborer. Things made here are needed by people there, and have to be carried to peoples' doors. One of the lines of activity in modern civilization is that of distribution, another that of travel and there are others. Sailors as well as ship builders, carriage drivers as well as carriage makers, railway workers as well as those who build embankments, lay tracks and build coaches and engines, and the host of others who contribute to the several activities must be included in the group of workers. These people add value to the things they distribute, and are justly entitled to the same honors and rewards accorded to those who are more evidently producers. Storekeepers and merchants are included in this grouping. The same discrimination, however, must be exercised in honoring and rewarding their function, as has already been done in treating of capitalists and directors of industrial enterprises; it is by their activity, by their labor alone that they earn the right to either or both. By selecting, handling, storing and distributing goods, they add value thereto, and thus earn a due measure of reward. By monopolizing all goods of a kind and thus preventing their free distribution, they earn the condemnation instead of the approval of society. We should never lose sight of the fact-and it can not be too often nor too strenously insisted upon-that, but for the original workers, the makers of the things in which shopkeepers deal and merchants traffic, the latter could not exist: no laborer, no merchant.

The world, or society as at present existing and informed, does not take this view of the several relative values of the merchant, shopkeeper, capitalist and laboring man. The former, together with so called profession-

al people are looked up to, the latter are benevolently tolerated, rather contemned perhaps or even patronized; "we must give them employment or what would become of them?" The question never occurs to the patronizers or to the employers: what would become of us if the workers, the commonest laborers should cease to work? That would indeed be a practical lessson in relative values.

What is the reason for this disregard and even contempt of the common laborer and mechanic? The reasons are many and in some respects cogent. Here is one: he who digs clay and makes bricks, makes roads, plows the soil mixes and carries mortar and generally does the fundamental work of society-work which society cannot do without- from the very nature and incidents of his occupation, is personally, and in his clothing, dirty and therefore unacceptable to people of leisure, shopkeepers, professional people and others who are habitually clean and well dressed. He is thus denied the pleasures and educative advantages of cultivated association. Moreover from the long hours he is obliged to work, he is unfit from exhaustion to engage in intellectual studies or esthetic pursuits and enjoyments, even if his meager income permitted the necessary expenditures. Incidently it may be noted, that this lack-deprivation-of refining pursuits-leads to over indulgence in purely animal enjoyments, and in its downward and cumulative effects, to that degeneracy so much exploited as a reason for the neglect, contempt and even punishment of the poor.

Only when such work as he is engaged in shall be of shorter duration, and his leisure hours increased; only when the unpleasant but necessary drudgery of life is respected and its performers valued as other workers are valued; only when his earnings are such as to permit him to wash and clean up, and dress in acceptable attire after work, need we expect him to spend time in the cultivation of his mind by intellectual and esthetic pursuits, and

in this way become an acceptable associate of cultivated people-what is called society. And inasmuch as a certain minimum amount of such work, hard, perhaps disagreeable, which he does, is necessary to the carrying on of social life; the only way to effect these improvements in his condition, (and in society's condition) to shorten his hours of work and augment his rewards, is this, namely: for many others now idle, to fall to and work, longer or shorter shifts at similar work. The scanty mental furnishings of the laborers would then have an opportunity of augmentation; and on the part of those now idle, who should partake of his work and lot for even short periods, they would experience both its joys and pains-for there is joy in all work,-and in this manner be drawn into closer sympathy, each with the other, and reciprocally. The conditions and arguments here set forth as pertaining to the "common laborer" are applicable also to mechanics generally. There is no reason in the nature of things, why the "dirty mechanic" should not have time enough and means enough, to enjoy leisure and at least for part of each day, to be a clean, well dressed, well informed and cultivated member of society. It should be borne in mind that, Bricks, Breakfast and Breeches, do not constitute the whole of life even to the poorest member of the community.

Under a state of affairs such as justice appears to dictate, men would have a chance to be rated at their true value, instead of the value and fashion of their clothes; and by "clothes" I mean more than woolen breeches and silk hats; I mean their possessions, and outward circumstances generally. Many of us remember with amusement, Teufelsdrock's mode of putting this question of clothes: "when I read of pompous ceremonials, coronations, Royal drawing rooms, and Levees * * and how the ushers and pursuivants are all in waiting; how Duke this is presented by Arch-

duke that, and innumerable Bishops, Admirals and miscellaneous functionaries are advancing to the Annointed Presence, and I strive * * * to form a clear picture of that solemnity, -on a sudden, as by an enchanter's wand the clothes fly off the whole dramatic corps, and Dukes, Grandees, Bishops, Generals and Annointed Presence itself, every mothers son of them stand straddling there, not a shirt on them; and I know not whether to laugh or weep. ** What would Majesty do, could such an accident befall in reality; should the buttons all simultaneously start, and the solid wool evaporate in very deed, as here in dream. Ach Gott! How each skulks into the nearest hiding place; their high state tragedy becomes a pickleherring farce to weep at; the tables and with them the whole Government, Legislation, Property, Police and civilized society are dissolved in wails and howls."

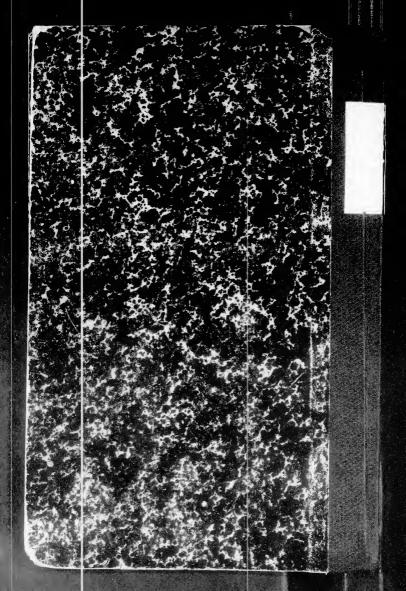
AFTERWORD

The conclusion of the whole matter, the inductions from all the facts and considerations set forth, prove beyond cavil, that every material thing which we use and enjoy, is the produce of labor including the most sordid and meanest-as we rate meanness-and those of a more skilful and higher kind-as we rate highness. That laborers are the necessary and final upholders of social activity and enjoyment. The logical corollary to this demonstration is this, namely: that laborers, and they only, are entitled-if JUSTICE be the rule-to the entire fruits of their toil, in short to all wealth. A further corollary is: that those persons who live a parisitic existence, those who consume without producing-coupon cutters and their dependants and retainers-are a dead weight and burden on society and might well be done without. And lastly, from the manifest dependence of one group of laborers on other groups and reciprocally, it appears to be just, that all laborers are, and each one of the n, is entitled to share equally in the common fund of wealth which they have created; the bellows-blower equally with the skilled organist, and so throughout every depart-

ment of productive activity.

The practical difficulty of attaining these results in daily life, suggests itself at once to thinkers; and to many mir ds the difficulty appears to be insuperable. beyond the scope of this essay however to attempt a solution. The complicated problem revealed by the foregoing analysis would appear to make it impossible to apportion wages equally between the immediate and remote participants in the various operations and produces involved in carrying on social life. Various schemes to this end have been devised and promulgated, both by practical thinkers and theorists; from a system of labor checks or certificates for an hour or days work through many modifications and going on to complete con munism in goods. The formula of the latter scheme being: "from every one according to his capacity and power; to every one according to his needs." Perhaps when all the necessary and comforting things of life becone as abundant as pins and matches, people would not thirk of begrudging their weaker or less skilful fellows all they required or could use. Here however the prolem is presented for individual cogitation and solution.





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